

Committee on Resources

Testimony

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Good Shepherd Campus
Las Vegas, Nevada
Forward

"Soteria": from the Greek *sozein* -- to rescue; to save; to be made whole in body, mind, spirit and memory; deliverance from trouble and from enemies both in general and specifically.

Soteria is the philosophy at the root of St. Jude's Ranch for Children. It is our mission to heal the physical, spiritual and psychological wounds of the youngsters who come into our care.

According to the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse and the U.S. Department of Justice, in 1995 alone:

- 3,111,000 cases of child abuse were ***reported*** in the United States ... ***and these were only the reported cases.***
- 5.8 million people were incarcerated in our penal institutions.
- of those 5.8 million people, including ***every*** inmate on death-row in San Quentin, ***97% were abused when they were children.***
- as children, ***80%*** of all prostitutes were sexually abused.

These statistics only show how many abuse cases were ***reported***. Who knows how many innocent children were abused and cried alone? What's really frightening is that we all know that humans are creatures of habit and environment: ***many children who are beaten grow up to beat their children.***

History

In 1962, the late Marie Lawton donated land in the northern section of the Las Vegas Valley to the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The Sisters established the Good Shepherd Program for adjudicated and troubled adolescent girls. A private, accredited junior and senior high school was operated on the Campus. The Sisters and faculty provided constant counseling, both during the girls' residency and during their transitions back to their families or re-introduction to the world.

A scarcity of nuns to staff the program and operate the facility, combined with diminished state financing, forced the Sisters to cease operations in 1989. St. Jude's Ranch for Children, bringing a 25-year record of providing residential care for abused, abandoned, neglected and troubled children, was approached by the

Nevada State Department of Human Resources to take over the operation of the Home of Good Shepherd.

On July 1, 1989, St. Jude's entered into a lease-option purchase agreement with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nevada covering the real estate and improvements of the former Home of the Good Shepherd located at 7000 North Jones Boulevard in northwest Las Vegas.

St. Jude's simultaneously entered into a contract with the State of Nevada and Clark County for the care of the girls placed at the Home of the Good Shepherd. The mission of the Campus was commenced with the first girls arriving on July 5, 1989. St. Jude's carried on the excellent, professional, respected and time-tested program which had been offered by the Sisters for the previous 27 years.

The Home of the Good Shepherd facility was hailed by social workers, probation officers and other juvenile service providers as being a top-notch program of a type not available elsewhere in the state. St. Jude's was proud of its accomplishments: in the 1989-90 academic year, all resident girls who took the state proficiency examination passed. ***This 100% successful accomplishment is unmatched in any other school in the state - public or private.***

Capitalizing on St. Jude's experience in private donor participation, St. Jude's developed a much broader realm of support from the private sector than the Sisters had enjoyed.

When St. Jude's took over the facility, it became immediately apparent that the buildings were in a state of serious disrepair and deterioration. There had been minimal maintenance for the previous 27 years and, in addition to the normal rebuilding and rehabilitation problems and expenses, a serious asbestos problem was discovered, with all of the attendant consequences.

Some of the immediate and very expensive remediation and rehabilitation matters were the necessity to install a new fire alarm system, new telephone system, new dormitory roof, new well pump, new transformer for the entire facility, attempt to resolve the asbestos problem with small abatement repairs, almost rebuild the entire lawn sprinkler system and purchase vehicles to transport the girls. St. Jude's received no governmental assistance and was completely dependent upon private donors to maintain the physical plant of the facility.

The St. Jude's Trustees, some of whom are involved in the construction industry, and other persons in the development field, had several meetings to study the problems and to come up with answers. The ultimate consensus was that St. Jude's could build a brand new Good Shepherd Campus for much less than the cost of purchasing and renovating the original facility.

After investing over \$1.2 million in the Home of the Good Shepherd and the program for the girls, the facility and program were closed on May 17, 1991. St. Jude's does not consider this a loss but rather an investment in the future of the community by saving many girls who were helped and truly had their lives turned around.

Mission

Although it was necessary to abandon the original Home of the Good Shepherd, St. Jude's has not abandoned the dream of the Good Shepherd Program. St. Jude's has been meeting with community and business leaders, our Congressional delegation, County Commission and City Council members and has informally discussed the program with various foundations whose grant criteria fit the Good Shepherd

Program.

St. Jude's is now prepared to launch a fundraising campaign to proceed with the development of Phase I of the Good Shepherd Campus. The new facility will be based upon the original Good Shepherd Program but will be expanded to provide more in-depth, psychological and psychiatric treatment. These expanded services will make the facility and programs eligible for insurance support, resulting in less dependency on donor and governmental funding.

The Good Shepherd Program not only offers an opportunity to heal and redirect adolescent girls, but instills the St. Jude's precept of *learn to earn* through vocational and educational training and therapy, resulting in the girls becoming productive members of society - the vicious and debilitating welfare cycle will be broken and the young women will *not* graduate to the state or federal penal systems.

The Good Shepherd Program is a well respected, time-tested, successful program which is greatly needed in the community. St. Jude's, which is a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization, is totally committed to providing this important service to this community, state, and country. With a core group of supporters who are ready, willing, and able to assist in fundraising endeavors, St. Jude's is ready to move forward. Staff and volunteer professionals will assist in acquiring and structuring endowments and bequests and in general estate and trust planning.

The Good Shepherd Campus will focus on the specific needs of abused, abandoned and troubled adolescent girls, some of whom are court supervised. *There are very few places in Nevada for girls in trouble -- besides jail or the streets.* St. Jude's aims to offer shelter and hope to *all of our* daughters and sisters; to extend a hand to help them break the awful cycle of abuse and give them *the love that they deserve.*

Real Estate Needs

Forty acres are needed to adequately develop the Good Shepherd Campus. The Good Shepherd Campus will follow the approved Boulder City Campus Master Site Plan as closely as is feasible, keeping the public and private areas separate. Seventeen cottages will house up to 102 girls. Six girls will live in each cottage with a cottage parent. These highly trained and dedicated professionals will staff the cottage 24 hours per day, 5 days per week and will be replaced on days off by relief cottage parents working 48 hour shifts. The goal of the St. Jude's program is to try to give troubled and abused girls lives that are as "normal" as possible - to show them what a "real" family is like and to teach the girls how to love, trust and behave in a healthy family setting.

Because many of the girls will be court supervised while in the Good Shepherd program, on-campus educational facilities, including junior high, high school, vocational training, and a state-of-the-art computerized library must also be included on the campus. The Campus will feature a kitchen and dining hall, administration center, child care offices, expressive arts therapy services, and a chapel where people of all faiths may worship. (Religious professionals of all religions traditionally visit St. Jude's three existing campuses and this program would be expanded to include the Good Shepherd Campus.)

One hundred two troubled girls, loaded with energy and raging hormones, will *require* on-site athletic facilities. Through 30 years of hands-on experience, St. Jude's has learned what many responsible parents already know: *excess energy will be burned - one way or another* - it is in *all* of our best interests to channel this energy into healthy athletic pursuits.

Meeting The Needs

The Good Shepherd Campus is more than foundations, framing, stucco, doors and windows. ***It is a place where compassion and commitment fill girls' lives with hope and new beginnings.*** That is the story St. Jude's wishes to tell and the message it would like to bring to the community.

The need for this facility has never been in doubt. Federal, state and local budget constraints have seriously hindered existing facilities and the future for these governmental services does not look good.

All of the child care studies have shown that if not healed, the effects of childhood abuse and neglect produce major anti-social behavior. A large percentage of abused children then end up in our adult criminal justice system and are lost forever.

The Good Shepherd Program provides a safe, loving home, and offers an opportunity to heal adolescent girls; to redirect them and lead them to become productive members of society. ***The savings in human terms, let alone tax dollars, are unmeasurable.***

On all of the St. Jude's campuses, children are taught to ***break the welfare cycle*** -- to ***learn to earn***. St. Jude's offers spiritual and psychological counseling and vocational training. Scholarships are available to those children who wish to go to college. (The youngsters must earn money through employment and St. Jude's matches their funds).

St. Jude's, as a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization, is totally committed to providing these important services to this community, state and country. St. Jude's needs the support of all members of the community and is blessed with a core group of supporters who are ready, willing and able to assist in the fundraising that is necessary.

Thank you for hearing us and even more for hearing the voices of the children as they cry out for help. Please review this information carefully and follow your head - and your heart.

Fund-Raising Program

Phase One

17 Cottages
Kitchen and Dining Hall
School & Library
Social Services Center
Administration Center
Expressive Arts Therapy Center
Chapel
Land Improvements

roads
sidewalks
gutters
parking

Landscaping

Phase Two

Arts & Crafts Center

Gym/Fieldhouse

Natatorium

Tennis & Basketball Courts

Track & Field